



Department of Defense DIRECTIVE

NUMBER 7050.6

August 12, 1995

IG, DoD

SUBJECT: Military Whistleblower Protection

- References:
- (a) DoD Directive 7050.6, subject as above, September 3, 1992 (hereby canceled)
 - (b) Chapter 47 and Sections 892, 1034, 1552, and 1553 of title 10, United States Code
 - (c) DoD Directive 6490. 1, "Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Armed Forces," September 14, 1993
 - (d) Section 552 and Appendix III of title 5, United States Code
 - (e) DoD Directive 5505.6, "Investigations of Allegations Against Senior Officials of the Department of Defense," July 12, 1991
 - (f) DoD Directive 7050.1, "Defense Hotline Program," March 20, 1987

1. REISSUANCE AND PURPOSE

This Directive reissues reference (a) to:

1.1. Update policy and responsibilities for military whistleblower protection under Section 1034 of reference (b).

1.2. Include complaints of sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination as "protected communications," as defined in enclosure E2, definition E2.1.8.

1.3. Expand the scope of persons and activities to whom a protected communication may be made, to include any person or organization (including any person or organization in the chain of command) designated under Component regulations or other established administrative procedures to receive such communications.

1.4. Include referral for mental health evaluations under reference (c) as a "personnel action," as defined in enclosure E2, definition E2.1.7.

2. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

This Directive applies to:

2.1. The Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments (including the Coast Guard when it is operating as a Military Service in the Navy), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (IG, DoD), the Defense Agencies, and the DoD Field Activities, including nonappropriated fund activities (hereafter referred to collectively as "the DoD Components"). The term "Military Services," as used herein, refers to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps.

2.2. All DoD personnel.

3. DEFINITIONS

Terms used in this Directive are defined in enclosure 2.

4. POLICY

It is DoD policy that:

4.1. Members of the Armed Forces shall be free to make a protected communication to a Member of Congress; an Inspector General (IG); a member of a DoD audit, inspection, investigation, or law enforcement organization; or any other person or organization (including any person or organization in the chain of command) designated under Component regulations or other established administrative procedures to receive such communications.

4.2. No person shall restrict a member of the Armed Forces from making a protected communication.

4.3. Members of the Armed Forces shall be free from reprisal for making or preparing a protected communication.

4.4. No person may take or threaten to take an unfavorable personnel action, or withhold or threaten to withhold a favorable personnel action, in reprisal against any member of the Armed Forces for making or preparing a protected communication.

4.5. Any violation of subsection 4.4., above, by a person subject to Chapter 47 of 10 U.S.C. (reference (b)), is punishable as a violation of Section 892 of reference (b). Any violation of subsection 4.4., above, by a civilian employee is punishable under regulations governing disciplinary or adverse actions.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. The Inspector General of the Department of Defense shall:

5.1.1. Expeditiously initiate, or request the IG of a DoD Component to initiate, an investigation of an allegation submitted to the IG, DoD, by a member of the Armed Forces, that the prohibitions of subsection 4.4., above, have been violated. No investigation is required when such allegation is submitted to the IG, DoD, more than 60 days after a member became aware of the personnel action that is the subject of the allegation. When the IG, DoD, requests the IG of the DoD Component to conduct the investigation, the IG, DoD, shall:

5.1.1.1. Ensure that the IG conducting the investigation is outside the immediate chain of command (as established under Component regulations) of the member submitting the allegation and the individual(s) alleged to have taken the reprisal action.

5.1.1.2. Review and determine the adequacy of the investigation. If such an investigation is inadequate, initiate a follow-up investigation to correct those inadequacies or ensure that the IG of a DoD Component corrects them.

5.1.2. Issue a report of investigation within 90 days of the receipt of the allegation of reprisal. If a determination is made that the report cannot be issued within that time, notify the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy (ASD(FMP)) and the member or former member of the reasons for the delay and when that report will be issued.

5.1.3. Notify the ASD(FMP) of the results of the investigation and provide a copy of the report of investigation to the member or former member not later than 30 days after completion of the investigation. The report of investigation shall include a

thorough review of the facts and circumstances relevant to the allegations, relevant documents acquired during the investigation, and summaries of interviews conducted. The report may include a recommendation as to the disposition of the complaint. The copy of the report released to the member or former member shall include the maximum disclosure of information possible except what is not required to be disclosed under 5 U.S.C. 552 (reference (d)).

5.1.4. Advise the member or former member concerned that he or she may request review of the matter by a board for correction of military records (BCMR).

5.1.5. At the request of a BCMR:

5.1.5.1. Submit a copy of the report of investigation to the BCMR.

5.1.5.2. Gather further evidence.

5.1.6. After the final action on a military reprisal complaint filed with the IG, DoD, when possible, interview the member or former member who made the allegation to determine his or her view on the disposition of the matter.

5.1.7. Initiate, or request the IG of a DoD Component to initiate, a separate investigation into the allegations contained in the protected communication when:

5.1.7.1. Such an investigation has not already been started.

5.1.7.2. The IG, DoD, determines the investigation was biased or inadequate.

5.1.8. When an investigation under paragraph 5. 1 .7., above, is required, submit a report on the results of the investigation to the ASD(FMP) and a copy of the report of investigation to the member or former member. The report of investigation shall include a thorough review of the facts and circumstances relevant to the allegations, relevant documents acquired during the investigation, and summaries of interviews taken. The copy of the report released to the member or former member shall include the maximum disclosure of information possible except what is not required to be disclosed under Section 552 of reference (d).

5.2. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy, under the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, shall:

5.2.1. On behalf of the Secretary of Defense, within 90 days of receipt of a

request submitted under enclosure E1, section E1.3., review the final decision of the Secretary of the Military Department concerned on applications for correction of military records decided under this Directive and 10 U.S.C. 1034 (reference (b)), and decide whether to uphold or reverse the decision of the Secretary of the Military Department concerned. The decision on behalf of the Secretary of Defense is final.

5.2.2. Have access to all research, reports, investigations, audits, reviews, documents, papers, or any other material necessary to carry out the responsibilities assigned to the ASD(FMP) by this Directive.

5.2.3. If necessary, obtain for review and request the Secretary of the Military Department concerned to comment on evidence considered by a BCMR when the Secretary of Defense is requested to reconsider the final decision of the Secretary concerned.

5.2.4. Notify the IG, DoD, of decisions made for the Secretary of Defense on requests submitted under enclosure E1, section E1.3. and issue such DoD Instructions as may be necessary to implement this subsection (5.2.) and the requirements of enclosure E1, section E1.3.

5.3. The Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Heads of the Other DoD Components shall:

5.3.1. Ensure that the Military Department or other Component IG (as applicable) shall:

5.3.1.1. On receipt of an allegation of reprisal from a military member, advise the member in writing that to obtain consideration of the matter under this Directive, complaints of reprisal must be made to the IG, DoD, or forwarded to the IG, DoD, under enclosure E1, section E1.1.

5.3.1.2. On written request of the member, forward the allegation to the IG, DoD, under enclosure E1, section E1.1. When an allegation of reprisal is made against a senior official of the Department of Defense, DoD Directive 5505.6 (reference (e)) also applies.

5.3.1.3. At the request of the IG, DoD, investigate the allegation of reprisal and provide the IG, DoD, within 90 days of the request, the report of investigation. That report shall include a thorough review of the facts and circumstances relevant to the allegations, relevant documents acquired during the investigation, and summaries of interviews conducted. The report may include a

recommendation as to the disposition of the complaint. The copy of the report submitted to the IG, DoD, for release to the member or former member shall include the maximum disclosure of information possible except what is not required to be disclosed under 5 U.S.C. 552 (reference (d)).

5.1.3.4. At the request of the IG, DoD, investigate the allegations contained in the member's protected communication. The report of investigation shall include a thorough review of the facts and circumstances relevant to the allegations, relevant documents acquired during the investigation, and summaries of interviews taken. The report may include a recommendation as to the disposition of the complaint. The copy of the report submitted to the IG, DoD, for release to the member or former member shall include the maximum disclosure of information possible except what is not required to be disclosed under Section 552 of reference (d).

5.3.2. Based on the IG report of investigation, take corrective action, to include providing assistance to members preparing an application to a BCMR, when implementation of the recommendations of the report requires action by a BCMR.

5.3.3. Ensure that the subject(s) of the investigation of an allegation of reprisal conducted under this Directive are afforded procedural protections, including the opportunity to present matters in their behalf, incident to administrative or disciplinary action, under Component regulations or other established administrative procedures governing such action.

5.3.4. Publicize the content of this Directive to ensure that military and other DoD personnel fully understand its scope and application.

5.4. The Secretaries of the Military Departments shall:

5.4.1. Ensure that the BCMR:

5.4.1.1. Considers applications for the correction of military records at the request of a member or former member, or otherwise, who alleged that the prohibitions of subsection 4.4., above, have been violated.

5.4.1.2. In resolving such an application:

5.4.1.2.1. Shall review the report by the IG under paragraph 5.1.1., above.

5.4.1.2.2. May request the IG, DoD, to gather further evidence.

5.4.1.2.3. May receive oral argument, examine and cross examine witnesses, take depositions, and, if appropriate, conduct a hearing. If a hearing is held, the requirements of enclosure EI, section E1.2., shall apply.

5.4.1.2.4. If the BCMR determines that a personnel action was in reprisal under this Directive, it may recommend to the Secretary of the Military Department concerned that disciplinary action be taken against the individual(s) responsible for such personnel action.


5.4.2. Issue a final decision on an application received under this Directive within 180 days after the application is filed. If the Secretary of the Military Department concerned fails to issue a final decision within that time, the member or former member shall be deemed to have exhausted the administrative remedies under 10 U.S.C. 1552 (reference (b)). Advise the member or former member that he or she may request review of the matter by the Secretary of Defense, under subsection 5.2., above, and enclosure E1, section E1.3., and that such a request must be made within 90 days of receipt of a decision by the Secretary of the Military Department concerned on the matter.

5.4.3. Order such action, consistent with the limitations in Sections 1552 and 1553 of reference (b), to correct the record of a personnel action prohibited by subsection 4.4., above.

5.4.4. Notify the IG, DoD, and the Military Department or other Component IG, of a decision on an application for the correction of military records received from a member or former member of the Armed Forces under this Directive and of any disciplinary action taken.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Directive is effective immediately.¹



John P. White
Deputy Secretary of Defense

Enclosures - 2

1. Requirements
2. Definitions

¹ As required by Section 1034 of reference (b), any implementing documents must stipulate that a violation of the prohibition in subsection 4.4., above, by a person subject to Chapter 47 of reference (b), is punishable as a violation of Section 892 of reference (b), and that such a violation by a DoD civilian employee is punishable under regulations governing disciplinary or adverse action.

E1. ENCLOSURE 1

REQUIREMENTS

E1.1. FILING A COMPLAINT OF REPRISAL

To be considered under this Directive, a complaint of reprisal (as defined in enclosure E2, definition E2.1.9.) must be made to the IG, DoD. The member or former member may request the complaint be forwarded to the IG, DoD, by the IG of a DoD Component.

E1.1.1. Time Limits. No investigation is required when a complaint is made or forwarded to the IG, DoD, more than 60 days after a member became aware of the personnel action at issue.

E1.1.2. Address. Complaints of reprisal may be made by telephone to the IG, DoD, at (800) 424-9098 or by letter addressed, as follows:

Department of Defense Inspector General
ATTENTION: Defense Hotline
1900 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1900

E1.1.3. Content of Complaint. To assist in the review of the complaint, provide as much of the following information as possible:

E1.1.3.1. Member's full name, rank, duty title, organization, duty location, commercial or Defense Switches Network (DSN) telephone numbers, and residence telephone number and mailing address for receipt of correspondence from the IG, DoD.

E1.1.3.2. A copy of the protected communication (as defined in enclosure E2, definition E2.1.8.) and any reply about the matter. If a copy is not available, include the date of the protected communication, to whom the protected communication was made, the content of the protected communication, and whether the matter was investigated, when and by whom.

E1.1.3.3. Identify the personnel action(s) (as defined in enclosure E2, definition E2.1.7.) taken, withheld, or threatened to be taken or withheld. Provide documentation about the personnel action or describe the type of personnel action and

the date such action occurred.

E1.1.3.4. Provide to the extent possible, the full name, rank and/or grade, duty title, organization, duty location, and commercial or DSN telephone number of the officials responsible for signing, taking, recommending, or influencing the personnel action at issue. Indicate why and how any official involved in the personnel action knew of the protected communication.

E1.1.3.5. List key witnesses and the information they have that will establish the personnel action at issue was in reprisal for making or preparing a protected communication; include commercial and DSN telephone numbers or other information on how to contact the witnesses.

E1.1.3.6. Provide any other information in support of the allegations. If possible, provide a chronology of events, including the date of the protected communication and dates of all subsequent personnel actions taken, withheld, or threatened to be taken or withheld.

E1.2. HEARING HELD BY A BCMR

If a BCMR elects to hold an administrative hearing under subparagraph 5.4.1.2. of the main body of this Directive, above, the member or former member who filed the application:

E1.2.1. May be represented by a judge advocate if all of the following conditions exist:

E1.2.1.1. The IG investigation finds there is probable cause that a personnel action was in reprisal for a member of the Armed Forces making or preparing a protected communication.

E1.2.1.2. The Judge Advocate General concerned determines that the case is unusually complex or otherwise requires judge advocate assistance to ensure proper presentation of the legal issues in the case.

E1.2.1.3. The member is not represented by outside counsel retained by the member.

E1.2.2. May examine witnesses through depositions, serve interrogatories, and request the production of evidence, including evidence in an IG investigatory record

not included in the report released to the member or former member.

E1.3. APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

A member or former member of the Armed Forces who has filed an application for the correction of military records under 10 U.S.C. 1034 (reference (b)) alleging reprisal for making or preparing a protected communication may request review by the Secretary of Defense of the final decision of the Secretary of the Military Department concerned on such application under this section and subparagraph 5.2.1. of the main body of this Directive, above.

E1.3.1. Requests based on factual allegations or evidence not previously presented to the cognizant BCMR shall not be considered.

E1.3.2. New allegations or evidence must be submitted directly to the BCMR for reconsideration under procedures established by the BCMR.

E1.3.3. Content of Appeal. The appeal to the Secretary of Defense must be in writing and include the following:

E1.3.3.1. Member's full name, rank, duty title, organization, duty location, and commercial or DSN telephone numbers.

E1.3.3.2. A copy of the application to the BCMR and the final decision by or for the Secretary of the Military Department concerned on such application.

E1.3.3.3. A statement of the specific reasons why the member or former member is not satisfied with the decision of the Secretary of the Military Department concerned and the specific remedy or relief requested.

E1.3.4. Time Limits. The request for review by the Secretary of Defense must be submitted within 90 days of receipt of the final decision by or for the Secretary of the Military Department concerned.

E1.3.5. Address. Address requests for review by the Secretary of Defense as follows:

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy
Attention: Director, Legal Policy
4000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-4000

E2. ENCLOSURE 2

DEFINITIONS

E2.1.1. Audit, Inspection, Investigation, and Law Enforcement Organizations.

The law enforcement organizations at any command level in any of the DoD Components, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the U.S. Army Audit Agency, the Naval Audit Service, the Air Force Audit Agency, and the Defense Contract Audit Agency.

E2.1.2. Board for Correction of Military Records (BCMR). Any board empowered under 10 U.S.C. 1552 (reference (b)) to recommend correction of military records to the Secretary of the Military Department concerned.

E2.1.3. Corrective Action. Any action deemed necessary to make the complainant whole; changes in Agency regulations or practices; administrative or disciplinary action against offending personnel; or referral to the U.S. Attorney General or court-martial convening authority of any evidence of criminal violation.

E2.1.4. Inspector General (IG). An IG appointed under Appendix III of 5 U.S.C. (reference (d)); or an officer of the Armed Forces or civilian employee assigned, detailed, or employed as an IG at any command level in one of the DoD Components.

E2.1.5. Member of Congress. Besides a Senator or Representative, includes any Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress.

E2.1.6. Member or Member of the Armed Forces. All Regular and Reserve component officers (commissioned and warrant) and enlisted members of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard (when it is operating as a Military Service in the Navy) on active duty, and Reserve component officers (commissioned and warrant) and enlisted members in any duty or training status. Includes professors and cadets of the Military Service academies and officers and enlisted members of the National Guard.

E2.1.7. Personnel Action. Any action taken on a member of the Armed Forces that affects or has the potential to affect that military member's current position or career. Such actions include a promotion; a disciplinary or other corrective action; a transfer or reassignment; a performance evaluation; a decision on pay, benefits,

awards, or training; referral for mental health evaluations under DoD Directive 6490. 1 (reference (c)); and any other significant change in duties or responsibilities inconsistent with the military member's rank.

E2.1.8. Protected Communication

E2.1.8.1. Any lawful communication to a Member of Congress or an IG.

E2.1.8.2. A communication in which a member of the Armed Forces communicates information that the member reasonably believes evidences a violation of law or regulation, including sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination, mismanagement, a gross waste of funds or other resources, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, WHEN such communication is made to any of the following:²

E2.1.8.2.1. A member of Congress, an IG, or a member of a DoD audit, inspection, investigation, or law enforcement organization.

E2.1.8.2.2. Any other person or organization (including any person or organization in the chain of command) designated under Component regulations or other established administrative procedures to receive such communications.

E2.1.9. Reprisal. Taking or threatening to take an unfavorable personnel action, or withholding or threatening to withhold a favorable personnel action, for making or preparing a protected communication.

E2.1.10. Senior Official. Active duty, retired, Reserve, or National Guard military officers in grades 0-7 and above, current and former civilians in the grade of GS or GM-16 or above, current or former members of the Senior Executive Service, and current and former DoD civilian presidential appointees.

E2.1.11. Unlawful Discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of color, national origin, race, religion or sex, as set forth in 10 U.S.C. 1034 (reference (b)).

E2.1.12. Whistleblower. A member of the Armed Forces who makes or prepares to make a protected communication.

² DoD Directive 7050.1 (reference (f)), further defines applicable terms.